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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the seventh meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/170 of 22 December 1995.

ANNEX

Report of the seventh meeting of persons chairing the
human rights treaty bodies

I. INTRODUCTION

1.6 Since the adoption of resolution 37/44 on 3 December 1982, the General Assembly has continuously kept under review the problems relating to the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights. Those problems have also received careful attention during the various sessions of treaty bodies, at some of the meetings of States parties and at meetings of other organs such as the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

2. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/117 of 16 December 1983, the Secretary-General convened the first meeting of the persons chairing the bodies entrusted with the consideration of State party reports in August 1984. The report of that meeting was presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session (A/39/484, annex). The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth meetings were convened by the Secretary-General in October 1988, October 1990, October 1992, September 1994 and September 1995. The reports of those meetings were presented to the Assembly at its forty-fourth, forty-fifth, forty-seventh, forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions (in the annexes of documents A/44/98, A/45/636, A/47/628, A/49/537 and A/50/505 respectively). It may be recalled that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/178 of 23 December 1995, the meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies have become annual since 1995.

3. In its resolution 50/170 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly welcomed the report of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies on their sixth meeting, held at Geneva from 18 to 22 September 1995, and took note of the conclusions and recommendations in the report (A/50/505, annex); welcomed the continuing efforts by the treaty bodies and the Secretary-General aimed at streamlining, rationalizing and otherwise improving reporting procedures, and urged the treaty bodies and the meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies to continue to examine ways of reducing the duplication of reporting required under the different instruments, without impairing the quality of reporting, and of generally reducing the reporting burden on Member States. The Commission on Human Rights welcomed the report of the sixth meeting of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and took note of its conclusions and recommendations in its resolution 1996/22 of 19 April 1996.

4. The seventh meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies was convened by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/170.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

5. The meeting was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 16 to 20 September 1996. The following representatives of the human rights treaty bodies attended: Mr. Francisco José Aguilar Urbina (Chairperson, Human Rights Committee), Mr. Philip Alston (Chairperson, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), Mr. Michael Banton (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), Ms. Akila Belembaogo (Chairperson, Committee on the Rights of the Child), Ms. Ivanka Corti (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and Mr. Alexis Dipanda-Mouelle (Chairperson, Committee against Torture).

6. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended the meeting: Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). A member of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities attended the meeting. The following regional intergovernmental organizations were represented at the meeting: Council of Europe (represented by the President of the European Commission on Human Rights), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In addition, representatives of the following non-governmental organizations attended: Amnesty International, Anti-Racism Information Service (ARIS), Baha'i International Community, the Catholic Association for Radio and Television, the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, International Service for Human Rights, International Women's Rights Action Watch, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Organization against Torture.

7. In addition to his address to open the meeting (see para. 13 below), Mr. José Ayala-Lasso, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, participated in a closed meeting with the chairpersons, who appreciated the opportunity to have a frank dialogue with him. The chairpersons appreciated also that the High Commissioner had implemented the project of providing office space and facilities for experts and special rapporteurs.

8. Mr. Bacre W. N'diaye, chairperson of the third meeting of special rapporteurs, representatives, experts, and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and the Advisory Services Programme addressed the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies on 19 September 1996.

9. The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of the officers of the meeting.

3. Adoption of the agenda.
 4. Organizational and other matters.
 5. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies.
 6. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies.
 7. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations non-conventional human rights bodies and mechanisms and regional organizations.
 8. Gender perspectives in the work of the treaty bodies.
 9. Prevention of human rights violations, including early warning and urgent procedures.
 10. Assistance to States in implementing treaty body recommendations.
 11. Adoption of the report to the General Assembly.
10. Owing to lack of time, the chairpersons decided to postpone item 9 until the next meeting.
11. The following documentation was made available to the participants:
- (a) Provisional agenda and annotations (HRI/MC/1996/1);
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General on improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/1996/2);
 - (c) Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the international instruments and the general situation of overdue reports (HRI/MC/1996/3);
 - (d) reports of the fifth and sixth meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/49/537, annex, and A/50/505, annex);
 - (e) Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/L.20);
 - (f) Interim report on the updated study by the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty regime (A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.11/Rev.1);
 - (g) Vienna statement of the international human rights treaty bodies (A/CONF.157/TBB/4 and Add.1);
 - (h) Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III);
 - (i) Compilation of general comments and general recommendations adopted by human rights treaty bodies (HRI/GEN/1/Rev.2);

(j) Preparation of a plan of action for a United Nations decade for human rights education: report of the Secretary-General (A/49/261 and Add.1);

(k) Reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education: 1995-2004 (A/50/698 and E/CN.4/1996/51);

(l) General Assembly resolutions 50/170 and 50/177;

(m) Commission on Human Rights resolutions 1996/16, 1996/22, 1996/44, 1996/48 and 1996/78;

(n) Report of the Secretary-General on the Restructuring the Centre for Human Rights: Programme Budget for the Biennium 1996-1997 (A/C.5/50/71);

(o) Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001: Programme 19: Human rights (A/51/6 (Prog. 19)).

12. The following informal working documents were also made available to the participants:

(a) Recommendations for advisory services and technical assistance by treaty bodies: compilation prepared by the Secretariat;

(b) Actions being taken regarding recommendations made by treaty bodies for advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights: compilation prepared by the Secretariat;

(c) Status of the international human rights instruments: compilation prepared by the Secretariat;

(d) Status of State party reports to be submitted to the principal international human rights instruments: compilation prepared by the Secretariat;

(e) Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Centre for Human Rights;

(f) Document relating to the round table organized by UNFPA, Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women on "Round Table on Approaches of Human Rights Treaty Bodies Towards Women's Health, with a Focus on Reproductive and Sexual Health Rights".

13. The meeting was opened by Mr. José Ayala-Lasso, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who addressed the chairpersons.

14. Ms. Ivanka Corti was elected Chairperson-Rapporteur of the meeting unanimously. The chairpersons agreed that the principle of rotation among the treaty bodies should be taken into consideration in future meetings.

15. On 20 September 1996, the chairpersons considered the draft report of their seventh meeting. The report, as amended during the course of the meeting, was adopted unanimously by the chairpersons.

III. REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE TREATY BODIES

16. Under this agenda item, the chairpersons provided information on recent activities of the treaty bodies they represented.

17. The chairperson of the Human Rights Committee referred to the increased active participation by specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations in the monitoring procedures under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He referred to the process to review the Committee's rules of procedures and its working methods. He also stated that the Committee had decided to prepare a series of new general comments and had appointed Committee members to prepare drafts. He pointed out that one of those general comments would concern article 3 of the Covenant regarding discrimination against women.

18. The chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stressed that the very existence of his Committee was legally tenuous because it had not been explicitly established by the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore, its legal existence could be called into question by the Economic and Social Council. Consideration should be given in the future to steps to be taken to remedy this situation.

19. The chairperson also regretted that his Committee had not been able to establish a constructive relationship with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), despite numerous requests. He noted the positive experience that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had had with UNICEF in terms of close cooperation, a relationship which had served not only to help promote knowledge of the Convention and its effective implementation, but which had also resulted in substantial additional financial and other resources being made available to that Committee. However, he questioned the wisdom of having one treaty body that was extremely well funded, while other treaty bodies had inadequate resources and administrative support with possibly no natural outside agencies to provide additional funding that could lead to increased effectiveness and more optimal functioning.

20. The chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child indicated that the Committee had visited Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, in cooperation with UNICEF, and subsequently participated in a seminar on the elimination of child labour.

21. The Committee had been asked to participate in a significant number of regional and international meetings. Most prominent among these had been the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm. The chairperson pointed out that all these visits made the Convention and the work of the Committee better known but the virtual universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, even if a positive achievement, posed the problem of the burden of work to the Committee in the present conditions.

22. The chairperson of the Committee against Torture commented that the major problems facing his Committee included ensuring that States parties to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Punishment respect reporting deadlines and reservations by States to conducting investigations. He also stressed that the Committee continued to work closely with international and regional mechanisms established to fight against torture.

23. The chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination referred to his Committee proposal of a new procedure for examining State parties initial reports when they are seriously overdue. He pointed out that the Committee's latest annual report to the General Assembly contains a new and detailed chapter on its methods of work, which explains how the Committee proceeds on a wide range of issues. The Committee had also decided to eliminate a summary of the discussions of initial and periodic reports in its annual report.

24. The chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women referred to a seminar organized by a non-governmental organization on how to improve the content and quality of concluding observations. She drew particular attention to the development of the proposed optional protocol describing the progress made by the in-session Working Group of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session. She informed the meeting that the working group had accepted the participation of an expert from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as a resource person. The Committee had also decided to explore on the basis of experience of other treaty bodies how to regularly receive information from non-governmental organizations and to what extent their representatives could participate in its monitoring procedures. The Committee had also decided to adopt a new form of annual report to the General Assembly which would focus on its concluding observations. The Committee had appointed some members as focal points to follow the work of the other treaty bodies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Improving the operation of the human rights treaty bodies

Promotion of international human rights treaties

25. The chairpersons recommend that any new human rights treaties should contain a provision that facilitates subsequent procedural amendments without going through the full constitutional ratification process in the State parties. It was suggested, for example, that any new human rights treaties should be drafted to provide that if two thirds of the States parties to such a treaty find that a decision to amend is procedural, then they can amend it in a meeting of States parties without referring it to their constitutional procedures for ratification.

26. The chairpersons further recommend that consideration be given to more creative approaches whereby several of the various procedural amendments to the human rights treaties could be packaged together in a single, comprehensive document to be transmitted to the States parties to allow them the option of

invoking their constitutional amendment procedures only once for all the amendments.

27. The chairpersons also recommend that the view of the treaty body concerned should be taken into account when the General Assembly considers proposals for optional protocols to human rights treaties.

States parties

28. The chairpersons note that a number of problems continue to exist between States parties and the treaty bodies, including the failure of some States to fulfil their reporting and financial obligations, and the increasing reporting burden upon States deriving from treaty bodies' requests for information. The chairpersons reiterate the recommendation of their fifth meeting (A/49/537, para. 17) that such problems be considered at regular meetings of States parties. These problems will demand extended attention when the independent expert has reported on possible long-term approaches to enhancing the effective operations of the treaty system.

Treaty-monitoring process

29. The chairpersons recommend that members of treaty bodies refrain from participating in any aspect of the consideration of the reports of the States which they are nationals, or communications or inquiries concerning those States, in order to maintain the highest standards of impartiality, both in substance and in appearance.

Human rights education

30. The chairpersons recommend that members of the various treaty bodies undertake substantial efforts in relation to all States parties, as well as their own national parliaments and human rights institutions, to publicize the six principal international instruments.

31. They further recommend that UNDP be invited to present at the next meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies a plan of action on how the principal human rights treaties and various reporting procedures could be promoted through its programmes. Similarly, when invited to the next meeting persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, ILO, UNHCR, UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF should also be asked to indicate what contribution they could make to the dissemination of knowledge about the principal human rights treaties and the various reporting procedures. Also, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) should be asked to attend the next meeting for the same purpose. The United Nations information centres should be asked to prepare a report regarding what they have done to disseminate information about the various international human rights treaties and the work of the treaty bodies.

32. The chairpersons also recommend that national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations take a more active role at the national level in monitoring and reporting upon the various steps States parties have taken or are taking in the process of taking to promote knowledge of the six principal human rights treaties, their translation into appropriate languages, as well as the

dissemination to the public of States parties reports to the various treaty bodies and the concluding observations of the treaty bodies relating to such reports. International or regional non-governmental organizations that work in cooperation with national organizations, as well as national non-governmental organizations themselves, are encouraged to present such information to the next meeting of the chairpersons.

External relations of treaty bodies

33. The chairpersons recommend that the person elected to chair the meeting of chairpersons continue to represent all of the persons chairing human rights treaty bodies in between the annual meetings in order to follow-up on the implementation of the chairpersons' recommendations and have the opportunity to attend meetings that could affect the treaty bodies as a whole.

34. The chairpersons express the wish that the Economic and Social Council amend the rules of the Commission on Human Rights so that the treaty bodies are recognized as having a distinct status that would enable them to participate in all relevant meetings. They further request that the General Assembly indicate in a resolution that the treaty bodies should, as a matter of principle, be permitted to participate in international meetings of interest to them. The Secretariat should take the necessary steps to establish a special fund within available resources to facilitate travel by one or more treaty body members to United Nations meetings and conferences that are considered to be of direct importance to the work of the treaty body concerned. The chairpersons are of the view that the inability of the treaty bodies to participate in international meetings of vital importance constitutes a setback for the improvement of the knowledge of the work of the various treaty bodies and even the awareness of their importance.

35. The chairpersons affirm once again that non-governmental organizations play a vital role in supplying the treaty bodies with documentation and other information on human rights developments that is extremely useful for their monitoring activities and that each treaty body should consider how best to monitor and facilitate this role. The chairpersons agree that at their next meeting a specific opportunity would be provided to non-governmental organization representatives to present their views. This would not prejudice in any way their participation at appropriate points during the meeting as a whole.

36. The chairpersons encourage non-governmental organizations to continue to take an active role in critically examining the work of the treaty bodies. Their constructive criticism should stimulate more effective performance by the treaty bodies as a whole as well as the performance of their individual members.

37. The chairperson notes that there have been very extensive delays in efforts by the Centre for Human Rights to develop electronic information systems that were recommended by the Commission on Human Rights as long ago as 1989. They note that in the meantime there have been many major developments in human rights databases, especially on the World Wide Web, and that materials of direct relevance to the work of the treaty bodies are now available on databases such as those of the UNHCR, UNICEF, ILO and the University of Minnesota

(<http://www.unicc.org/unhcrcdr/>; <gopher://hqfaus01.unicef.org:70/1>; <http://www.unicc.org/ilo/index.html>; <http://www.umn.edu/humanrts/>; <http://heiw.unige.ch/humanrts/>). They urge those involved in the development of these databases to seek to include treaty body materials as fully as possible on their sites and recommend that the Centre for Human Rights make a particular effort to cooperate in every possible way with the complementary development of such databases.

38. The chairpersons express the view that non-governmental organizations should be invited by the chairperson of a treaty body to attend the press conference usually held at the end of each session without their participating in the dialogue between the journalists and the members of the treaty bodies. Individual treaty bodies may also wish to consider a separate non-governmental organization briefing at the end of their sessions in addition to the traditional press conference.

39. The chairpersons request each treaty body to make available to the public the addresses of their members so that communication, in particular between non-governmental organizations and treaty body members, can be facilitated. The request of treaty body members who object to their coordinates being made available to the public should be respected.

Secretariat support

40. The chairpersons note with concern that the plans to restructure the Centre for Human Rights, which will have a major impact on existing long-standing arrangements in relation to the servicing of the five Geneva-based treaty bodies, have proceeded on the basis of no meaningful consultation with the chairpersons or with the treaty bodies. They note that, less than two weeks before very major changes are to be announced and implemented, they have not yet received any information that would enable them to understand how the new arrangements will look or how they will operate. In view of the need to ensure that an effective working partnership is developed between the treaty bodies and the Secretariat, the chairpersons call upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that this lack of consultation and transparency be remedied in the following ways: (a) each chairperson should be notified of the details of the reorganization of the relevant part of the Centre for Human Rights as soon as they are announced; (b) each Committee should be briefed in detail as to the arrangements; and (c) genuine consultations should take place between representatives of the treaty bodies and the Secretariat to ensure the optimal use of available resources.

41. The chairpersons also consider it to be essential that the staff members servicing the treaty bodies be encouraged to discuss among themselves and with the treaty bodies the best ways in which to organize the work in which they are mutually engaged. This spirit of partnership and interaction has been notably absent in the past, despite the considerable contribution that it can make to improved working relations and more effective servicing.

42. On the basis of the extremely vague details provided thus far by the Secretariat in relation to the proposed restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights on the servicing to be provided to the treaty bodies, the chairpersons

express their deep concern that the apparent elimination of individuals designated as Committee secretaries will be extremely inefficient, counter-productive and ultimately unworkable.

43. The annual meeting of chairpersons has the potential to perform very important functions in terms of ensuring a more effective as well as a more efficient functioning of the treaty supervisory system. If this potential is to be fully realized it is essential that a consistent flow of information be made available to the chairpersons so that they are in a position to discuss the relevant issues in an informed and focused manner. The chairpersons note, by way of example, that the key issue of a radical reduction of the resources concerning the documentation of the treaty bodies has not always been dealt with in a satisfactory manner. If the chairpersons are to be in a position to discuss in a meaningful way an issue that has the potential to undermine the very foundation upon which the existing system of reports and supervision is based, it is essential that they be briefed in detail and provided with all of the relevant background documentation.

44. In order to ensure the availability of comprehensive documents submitted by some States parties to the treaty bodies, the chairpersons request the Secretary-General to exempt the treaty bodies from the rule established by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/117 B of 10 December 1981, according to which United Nations documents should be distributed only when they are available in all of the official working languages of the bodies concerned. For such documents, the chairpersons request discretion to designate in what working language or languages those documents should be made available to ensure the timely consideration by treaty bodies of all material submitted by the States parties concerned.

45. The chairpersons received during the meeting a copy of the "Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" prepared in 1995 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Although the time remaining after the distribution of the document did not permit a discussion of its content, the chairpersons note with appreciation the efforts made to strengthen the support provided to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. They also note, however, that as a result of this programme and of the special support already received by the Committee from other sources, there is a risk of a radical imbalance emerging between the resources and support available to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and that available to the other five treaty bodies. While assurances have been given that there will be a significant flow-on effect and that the programme for the Committee on the Rights of the Child is a pilot programme that could subsequently be applied in relation to other treaty bodies, the chairpersons call for greater attention to be given to the measures necessary to ensure that such an imbalance does not occur.

46. The chairpersons reaffirm their support for the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to have its secretariat to be transferred to the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, which is contained in Committee's resolution 14/II. The chairpersons regret that this resolution, as well as the numerous recommendations of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies on this matter, have not been respected. They share the Committee's view

that the Committee cannot function properly if its secretariat is physically separated from the secretariat of all the other human rights treaty bodies.

47. The chairpersons recommend that the development and maintenance of the treaty body information database system be pursued and reinforced. They also recommend that, as soon as this information system is fully operational, each member of all treaty bodies be given the possibility to access the database; and that access to documents for general distribution be made available to the public by means of the Internet Web site to be established by the Centre for Human Rights.

48. The chairpersons request the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements so that all experts of the treaty bodies obtain the United Nations certificates to which they are entitled during their mandate.

B. Cooperation of human rights treaty bodies with United Nations non-conventional human rights bodies and mechanisms and regional organizations

49. The chairpersons note that one of the items on the agenda for the Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), to be held at Singapore in December 1996, concerns proposals to adopt a "social clause" which would link respect for certain human rights (notably freedom of association, non-discrimination in employment, and the elimination of exploitative child labour) to access to trade opportunities. They note that whatever the respective merits of such proposals, the system of treaty supervision in which the treaty bodies are engaged already provides an important avenue for monitoring compliance with States obligations in these and related areas and that a greater effort should be made to strengthen these existing opportunities.

50. The chairpersons note that some organizations such as ILO and UNHCR have established CD-ROM databases relating to their international instruments and fields of activity and recommend that such organizations make that material available to the Centre for Human Rights and to individual treaty body members, at a reduced price, to contribute to the improvement of their work.

51. The chairpersons recommend that in the future treaty bodies consider much more carefully what kind of assistance they would like from United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. They should do their utmost to describe as precisely as possible their requests to such bodies and specialized agencies.

52. The chairpersons recognize that cooperation is a reciprocal process and recommend that treaty bodies similarly work with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to enhance the effectiveness of their work, by providing documentation and responding to specific requests.

53. The chairpersons recommend that, where appropriate, the treaty bodies take a more active role in supporting, suggesting topics for, and cooperating in the preparation of studies by the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, as well as by special rapporteurs and other experts appointed by the Commission on Human Rights. The chairpersons note the

important contribution that special rapporteurs and other experts appointed by the Commission on Human Rights have made to the work of the treaty bodies and recommend that efforts continue to be made to increase existing cooperation. Special rapporteurs and other experts whose work is of direct relevance to the activities of a particular treaty body could schedule their visits to the United Nations in connection with the meeting of the treaty bodies concerned in order to have direct cooperation on issues of mutual concern.

54. The chairpersons recommend that written reports for general distribution be issued about the development of cooperation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Bretton Woods institutions and UNDP, given the interest of various treaty bodies in developing a constructive relationship with these organizations.

55. The chairpersons are of the view that it would greatly assist the treaty bodies to have access to the country reports prepared by the World Bank and request that the Centre for Human Rights proceed expeditiously in its planned meeting with World Bank officials in November 1996 to put into place procedures for access to such documentation.

56. The chairpersons recommend that the Centre for Human Rights engage in an active dialogue with Bretton Woods institutions so that in the references to human rights standards by these institutions, the applicable United Nations human rights instruments will be given a preeminent role.

57. The chairpersons recommend that individual treaty bodies enhance cooperation with regional human rights mechanisms when appropriate. It notes with satisfaction that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee are engaged in the process of establishing liaison relationships with a number of regional human rights organizations.

C. Gender perspectives in the work of the treaty bodies

58. The chairpersons wish to recall that at their sixth meeting they recommended the following:

(a) The treaty bodies shall fully integrate gender perspectives into their presessional and sessional working methods, including identification of issues and preparation of questions for country reviews, general comments, general recommendations, and concluding observations. In particular, the treaty bodies should consider the gender implications of each issue discussed under each of the articles of the respective instruments;

(b) Guidelines for the preparation of reports by States parties should be amended to reflect the necessity of providing specific information on the human rights of women for consideration by the respective committees;

(c) In undertaking investigative procedures, the treaty bodies should make special efforts to elicit information about the situation of women in the area of inquiry;

(d) Treaty bodies should consistently request gender-disaggregated data from States parties and from United Nations specialized agencies and use the data in reviewing country reports;

(e) The treaty bodies should make every effort to exchange information on progress, developments and situations concerning the human rights of women;

(f) In preparing reports of the treaty body sessions, attention should be paid to the use of gender-inclusive language wherever possible.

59. The chairpersons noted that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, having considered the recommendation to change its guidelines for the preparation of State party reports, decided that they did not need alteration.

60. In the light of the recommendations of the sixth meeting of chairpersons to incorporating gender perspectives in the work of the treaty bodies, the chairpersons recommend that each treaty body continue to consider how it might most effectively include this issue in its work practices.

61. The chairpersons recommend that the issue of gender perspective in the work of the treaty bodies be placed on the agenda of their next meeting to enable them to review the progress made in the meantime.

D. Assistance to States in implementing committee recommendations

62. The chairpersons recommend that treaty bodies be as specific as possible in elaborating concluding observations on State party reports involving recommendations for technical assistance to be made available by the Centre for Human Rights to the State concerned.
